

Anna Kwiecień

Knowledge worker as an important element of an organization in the new economy

Ekonomiczne Problemy Usług nr 105, 221-229

2013

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

ANNA KWIECIEN

Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Katowicach

KNOWLEDGE WORKER AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF AN ORGANIZATION IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Introduction

Result of the reorientation of New Economy that is gradual transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based, knowledge, information-based economy results in creation of the New Economy or as it has been named the Knowledge Economy¹ It has changed competition by material, economic resources into competition by immaterial resources, especially by human resources, knowledge as well as new technologies. It is worth mentioning that knowledge which plays crucial role in New Economy has been possessed by people and therefore they should be considered as the basis of the New Economy enterprises. In such circumstances these people should be referred to as knowledge workers.

The complete success of the New Economy enterprises depends on the way knowledge is used to gain profits. Therefore successful cooperation with knowledge workers is necessary. They are specialists and professionalists who are mobile and independent at work, that is why one should try to build sound working relations with them. Relations based on high motivation and trust.

In the light of these considerations the given work will focus on basic terms important as far as corporation with knowledge workers in the New Economy enterprises is concerned.

This is the essence of the New Economy, the notion of knowledge and a knowledge worker as well as tools which facilitate effective corporation with knowledge workers. The aim of the paper is pointing at the importance of

¹ In the given paper the term New Economy is used interchangeably with the term Knowledge Economy – gospodarka oparta na wiedzy (GOW).

knowledge and knowledge workers who guarantee success of the New Economy enterprises. It is also to show the most important elements of corporation with knowledge workers.

1. The term New Economy

The term New Economy has not been yet fully defined and unified. Nevertheless, there are many who agree that development and spread of tele-information technologies highly changes theory and practices of such branches as business, management, economy and marketing².

Information and knowledge serve as an additional value, they increase effectiveness and efficiency of management. The quality they possess, as well as the fact they are 'up-to-date', are important competitive factors for the New Economy enterprises. Some characteristic features of the New Economy can be defined. One can describe it as:

- informative – it is based on abilities to generate, data processing and commercializing information,
- global – deals with actions on a global, worldwide scale,
- web related – it functions in integrated 'models' of web which connect many, different participants.

New Economy has nothing in common with previous industrial patterns. It introduces its own logic where constant search for, as well as increasing of, opportunities is present. Moreover, it is based on knowledge, creativity, dynamism. It requires increased flexibility and an open approach towards business environment from each company. In such circumstances organizations are ready for certain changes, they can make their structures more flexible. Hierarchical order tends to be more flexible as well, fixed procedures are abolished and workers gain more autonomy. Their self-education is facilitated and they are motivated to take advantage of their knowledge with an invention of satisfying their customers' needs.

2. Knowledge the basic resource of the New Economy

Description of the concept of the Knowledge Economy requires understanding what in fact knowledge is. As inaccurate definitions may be confusing and may lead to misunderstanding. According to the subject literature, information and data

² M. Marczuk: *Krótką charakterystyką nowej gospodarki*, w: *Internet – fenomen społeczeństwa informatycznego*, T. Zasepa (ed.), Wydawnictwo Edycja św. Pawła, Częstochowa 2001, p. 14.

are the basis of knowledge. They become knowledge themselves after their processing is completed³.

To define it more precisely, the basic unit of information is data. Collection of information which is structuralized and interpreted by knowledge. The ability to modify, use and create knowledge is on the other hand defined as wisdom. Knowledge can be characterized as a flexible substance which is an effect of mental processing of information that someone had gathered. As it is related to human beings, and is a part of a complex human nature, it is difficult to be understood and predicted. It is flexible combination of already shaped, formed experience and values, structuralized information and precise inside overview which helps to evaluate and introduce new experiences and information⁴.

There are three forms of knowledge to be achieved⁵:

- Personalized – mental form, it is transferred by humans,
- Established – related to services, relations, products, brands, processes, technologies,
- Codified – a collection of information, is it transferred, presented by projects, data, documents or publications,

Knowledge is an abstract concept. It is untouchable and invisible, it cannot be seen or touched and therefore it is described as invisible, immaterial resource. Knowledge is difficult to be presented as its worth depends on different situations where one needs certain information, knowledge. We know we want to know something only in the moment when there is a need to know it⁶. One can find it in many different kinds of documents, however, the major part of it is gathered in human mind and is transferred by humans. Therefore, human resources are so essential as far as knowledge is concerned.

3. Knowledge workers

The issue of the New Economy functioning is information management including knowledge management. However, as it has been pointed earlier, humans are the most responsible for transferring information in an enterprise. It may suggest that progress of human resources may lead to progress of knowledge in whole company. As workers are related to knowledge, different category of a worker- that is

³ J.J. Brdulak: *Zarządzanie wiedzą a proces innowacji produktu, budowanie przewagi konkurencyjnej firmy*, Szkoła Główna Handlowa, Warszawa 2005, p. 14.

⁴ T.H. Davenport, L. Prusak: *Working Knowledge. How Organisations Manage What They Know*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston 2000, p. 5/after/; F. Krawiec, *Strategiczne myślenie w firmie*, Difin, Warszawa 2003, p. 65.

⁵ *Podstawy zarządzania przedsiębiorstwami w gospodarce opartej na wiedzy*, B. Mikula, A. Pietruszka-Ortyl, A. Potocki (eds), Difin, Warszawa 2007, p. 113.

⁶ Ch. Evans: *Zarządzanie wiedzą*, PWE, Warszawa 2005, p. 30.

a knowledge worker; has been introduced. Knowledge workers are those who possess high level of specialized knowledge, education or experience. Their work consists of using, creating or distributing knowledge⁷. They belong to a new category of specialists. The goal of their work is an effective usage of gathered knowledge as well as knowledge exchange. Their task is to plan, create and introduce new ideas which will make it possible for a given organization to adjust its strategy to constant changes in a business environment.

These workers are to search, exchange, join and use knowledge within organization structures as well as outside organization⁸. It has to be emphasized that a knowledge worker, because of an ability to use his or her knowledge, can have (in some circumstances) high influence on a given organization. He can provide a considerable value to an organization.

Knowledge workers can be characterized by:

- their own intellectual property – experience, thoughts, intellectual capability,
- their own social property - social connections, acquaintances, social position,
- confirmed qualifications,
- confirmed achievements,
- financial situation – factor determining independence and quality of worker's services⁹.

Knowledge workers are considered to be professionalists. They possess high competence, abilities to play different organizational roles, versatile experience, capabilities and abilities and mobility. Moreover, they are very independent as they only sell their services to the certain extent so they are free to change their employers which may lead to loss of profits of an organization they are about to leave. Thus, it is important to eliminate risk of losing a knowledge employee.

4. Motivation and trust as important aspects of knowledge workers management

When success of an organization and its competitiveness are rather based on knowledge usage and management¹⁰ than on physical, material and financial resources allocation, a worker himself is perceived as the most profitable investment in an organization.

⁷ T.H. Davenport: *Thinking for a Living: How to get better performance and results from knowledge workers*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston – Massachusetts 2005, p. 10.

⁸ *Dopasuj strukturę firmy do nowych wyzwań komunikacyjnych*, Harvard Business Review Polska 2009, p. 122.

⁹ A.K. Koźmiński: *Zarządzanie w warunkach niepewności*, PWN, Warszawa 2004, p. 78.

¹⁰ A. Jaruga, J. Fijałkowska: *Rachunkowość i zarządzanie kapitałem intelektualnym – koncepcje i praktyka* ODDK, Gdańsk 2002, p. 15.

Investment in humans resources brings many gains. Self-respect of a given worker increases, person's dignity, ego is protected, he or she has a feeling of job fulfillment and as a result he is more interested in work of his or her organization¹¹. Every investment in human resource is an investment resulting in human resource accumulation or increase in human resource productivity¹². There are certain differences between it and other investments.

First of all, it carries a great amount of risk as it deals with an autonomic subject of investment and an increase rate that is difficult to assess. Such investments can be of other nature, not only material one. One can invest in suitable working conditions and sound atmosphere trying to provide sense of trust and partnership.

Knowledge workers are professionals with individual competences, intellectual capabilities who are perfect at work they perform, that is why they are very mobile. They can change work place easily which may mean a great loss for an employer. Knowledge workers do not have to worry about work time and place, because they are mobile and competent, so they can work whenever and wherever they want. It is an organization which is the most interested in hiring a knowledge worker. Usually he does not care which organization he will work for, he can develop his carrier in every organization¹³.

It is worth noticing that such workers possess special resource which is knowledge which value does not decrease even when it is transferred to others. Thus, knowledge workers can also work for an organization as well as for its competitors. Therefore, keeping a knowledge worker in a given organization seems to be difficult and very important task. It can be quite a challenge to constantly motivate and encourage knowledge workers to work for a given organization. An organization should be managed in such a way to provide good working conditions, so that a knowledge worker and his capabilities stay in a given company. An employer has to be aware of the fact that good relations with his workers are very crucial as their knowledge is a weapon which can be turned against him and used by his competitors. Sound relations in an organization, motivation system and trust can guarantee that workers will be loyal. Thus, an effective motivation can be quite a challenge. Good motivation means encouraging workers to be creative and to use resources they possess which a company is not always aware of. Moreover, this group of workers have different needs than other workers. They are much more interested in fulfilling higher needs, self-satisfaction, gaining respect, appreciation.

¹¹ M. Jagódka: *Kapitał ludzki jako czynnik wzrostu konkurencyjności przedsiębiorstwa*, EiOP 2011, No. 4, p. 31.

¹² Discussed more in: P. Bochniarz, K. Gugala: *Budowanie i pomiar kapitału ludzkiego w firmie*, Poltext, Warszawa 2005, p. 119.

¹³ K. Perechuda, M. Morawski: *Zarządzanie wiedzą w przedsiębiorstwie*, PWN, Warszawa 2005, p. 204-207.

Financial motivation is not a very effective one. What is more important is working atmosphere, perspective for a carrier or a sense of autonomy. Furthermore, it is important to encourage them to share their knowledge so that good ideas and plans can be spread in whole organization. It appears to be difficult as sharing knowledge does not lie in human nature.

The problem is not only related to an individual but also to an organizational culture which does not encourage sharing knowledge process¹⁴.

Therefore, there is a need to create motivation system that will eliminate all the barriers holding free knowledge, information flow. Workers should not be assessed only because of their work results. The ability to share knowledge should also be evaluated. These procedures enable keeping knowledge in an organization, its sharing and development. Trust in relations in a given organization is, apart from motivation system, one of the constant notions in the world of changing concepts of organization management which guarantee best solutions and effective cooperation with knowledge workers. Organizations should build good relations with their workers based on strategic partnership. They should also invest in human resources and development of organizational culture which can assure effective work, self-development of workers and their long-term working satisfaction. All of the above is based on a mutual trust. It is understood as a trust of a knowledge worker who knows he will not be used by an employer. On the contrary he will be treated honestly and his good will be valued. It is a factor which can provide work commitment and start psychological contract between a worker and an employer.

If one wants to gain trust, confidence of his employees he should follow certain rules :

1. Communication ought to be open. Management should share vital information with their workers and talk over important issues during regular meetings. Organization management should be aware of all the factors which motivate and demotivate workers.
2. Keeping promises. Companies should always keep what they promised to workers. In other way, workers will loss trust, confidence in management completely.
3. The way workers are treated- they should be treated equally. Nobody should be favored or discriminated. Management ought to choose a strategy to keep valuable employees, develop leadership skills and what is the most important respect employee as a unique human being.
4. Role of a leader – role of a supervisor – a leader plays a significant role when it comes to building trust in an organization. According to Peter Druker: "You cannot prevent a major catastrophe but you can build an organization that is battle-ready, where people trust one another. In military

¹⁴ E. Krok: *Kluczowe aspekty zarządzania wiedzą*, Studia i Materiały Polskiego Stowarzyszenia Zarządzania Wiedzą, Bydgoszcz 2007, No. 8, p. 93-94.

training, the first rule is to instill soldiers with trust in their officers-because without trust , they won't fight".

5. Human relations - management should stay in touch with workers all the time. It is good when workers are informed of management's plans, goals, ideas.
6. Organization takes care of a worker - an employer should not only be interested in employee's work and his achievements. It is important to remember that workers have also other aims and needs in life not only these related to work¹⁵.

Apart from the above rules helping to build trust between employers and knowledge workers, one can notice three ways of behaving which are facilitators for building this trust:

- creating common vision and understanding the way an organization acts. It requires sharing the same way of thinking, aiming at the same goals, similar way of working as well as approving the same organizational system of work assessment and job rewarding;
- pointing at behaviors which build trust – active listening, encouraging knowledge workers to express their own opinions. Relations between knowledge workers are very important for building high level of trust;
- group meetings- although integration does not always help to build trust, meetings provide a chance of conversation which is a sign of goodwill and openness. Members of other working teams may find it difficult to frequently meet. Therefore, managers should help them to keep contact. It is important to create real as well as virtual ways, aspects, channels of building trust in an organization. When workers trust organization and its management they are loyal, interested in fulfilling plans of their organization. Moreover, clients and contractors tend to trust organization more and company is perceived as more successful, attractive on the market. It means keeping the best workers in a company and attracting, employing new ones.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it may be noticed that with the New Economy a new epoque of intellectual resources of an organization has started¹⁶.

Among them there is knowledge, very flexible substance which is an effect of information processing which are stored in human brain¹⁷. It adds value to goods

¹⁵ http://www.tipy.pl/arttykul_558_jak-zbudowac-zaufanie-pracownikow.html

¹⁶ *Scenariusze, dialogi i procesy zarządzania wiedzą*, K. Perechuda, M. Sobińska (eds), Difin, Warszawa 2008, p. 219.

¹⁷ *Podstawy zarządzania przedsiębiorstwami w gospodarce...*

which are produced and is a source of ideas, inspirations and abilities important for an organization¹⁸.

Nevertheless, people – are the most important as they share knowledge with others. Therefore, the position of knowledge worker appears. It is a professionalist who is mobile and independent at work. Thus, there is a risk of losing this worker and his abilities together with his knowledge. To prevent it, each organization should be managed in a way to use this knowledge effectively. This management should consist of high motivation system which will encourage knowledge workers and provide mutual trust in knowledge sharing processes.

Nowadays hiring knowledge workers is a necessity for an organization. Managing these employees is, on the other hand, a challenge because they are aware of their own value. One can honestly say that the key to success is now full commitment of all the workers. In order to achieve this commitment an organization should take care of knowledge workers and provide them with conditions for self-development and carrier development. Knowledge workers are role models for other employees who can model upon them and as a result work more effectively.

Literature

1. Bochniarz P., Gugala K.: *Budowanie i pomiar kapitału ludzkiego w firmie*, Poltext, Warszawa 2005.
2. Brdulak J.J.: *Zarządzanie wiedzą a proces innowacji produktu, budowanie przewagi konkurencyjnej firmy*, Szkoła Główna Handlowa, Warszawa 2005.
3. Davenport T.H.: *Thinking for a Living: How to get better performance and results from knowledge workers*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston – Massachusetts 2005.
4. Davenport T.H., Prusak L.: *Working Knowledge. How Organizations Manage What They Know*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston 2000.
5. *Dopasuj strukturę firmy do nowych wyzwań komunikacyjnych*, Harvard Business Review Polska, październik 2009.
6. Evans Ch., *Zarządzanie wiedzą*, PWE, Warszawa 2005.
7. http://www.tipy.pl/arttykul_558,jak-zbudowac-zaufanie-pracownikow.html
8. Jaruga A., Fijałkowska J.: *Rachunkowość i zarządzanie kapitałem intelektualnym – koncepcje i praktyka*, ODDK, Gdańsk 2002.
9. Koźmiński A.K.: *Zarządzanie w warunkach niepewności*, PWN, Warszawa 2004.
10. Krawiec F.: *Strategiczne myślenie w firmie*, Difin, Warszawa 2003.
11. Krok E.: *Kluczowe aspekty zarządzania wiedzą*, Studia i materiały Polskiego Stowarzyszenia Zarządzania Wiedzą, 2007, No. 8.

¹⁸ J. Penc: *Decyzje i zmiany w organizacji. W poszukiwaniu skutecznych sposobów działania*, Difin, Warszawa 2008, p. 58-60.

12. Jagódka M.: *Kapitał ludzki jako czynnik wzrostu konkurencyjności przedsiębiorstwa*, EiOP 2011, No. 4.
13. Marczuk M.: *Krótką charakterystyka nowej gospodarki*, w: *Internet – fenomen społeczeństwa informatycznego*, Zasepa T. (ed.), Wydawnictwo Edycja św. Pawła, Częstochowa 2001.
14. Penc J.: *Decyzje i zmiany w organizacji. W poszukiwaniu skutecznych sposobów działania*, Difin, Warszawa 2008.
15. Perechuda K., Morawski M.: *Zarządzanie wiedzą w przedsiębiorstwie*, PWN, Warszawa 2005.
16. *Podstawy zarządzania przedsiębiorstwami w gospodarce opartej na wiedzy*, B. Mikula, A. Pietruszka-Ortyl, A. Potocki (eds), Difin, Warszawa 2007.
17. *Scenariusze, dialogi i procesy zarządzania wiedzą*, K. Perechuda, M. Sobińska (eds), Difin, Warszawa 2008.

PRACOWNIK WIEDZY JAKO ISTOTNY ELEMENT PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW NOWEJ EKONOMII

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu było zwrócenie uwagi na ogromne znaczenie wiedzy i pracowników wiedzy, którzy są podstawą funkcjonowania przedsiębiorstw w Nowej Gospodarce oraz na właściwe podstawy efektywnej współpracy z tymi pracownikami. W artykule omówiono pojęcie Nowej Ekonomii, wiedzy i pracownika wiedzy. Wskazano także istotne elementy zarządzania pracownikami wiedzy, podkreślając, że podstawą takiego zarządzania jest odpowiedni dla pracowników wiedzy system motywacji oraz wzajemne zaufanie w racjach, które warunkuje efektywny proces dzielenia się wiedzą.

Tłumaczenie Anna Kwiecień